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HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

ADDRESS

OF

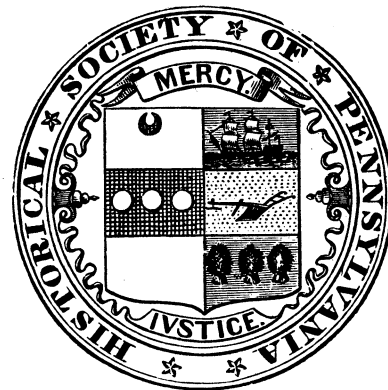
NATHANIEL BURT,

FEBRUARY 12, 1875,

ON THE

WASHINGTON MANSION

IN PHILADELPHIA.



PHILADELPHIA:

JAMES A. MOORE, PRINTER, 1222 AND 1224 SANSON STREET

1875.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

ADDRESS

OF

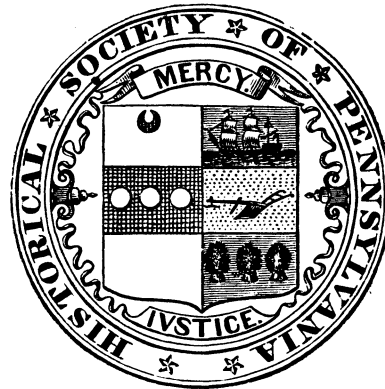
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1875.

PRELIMINARY CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA, January 6th, 1875.

DEAR SIR:—

Some confusion of idea, as you are aware, has prevailed of late among antiquaries, as to the exact situation and history of the house, in Market street, below Sixth, occupied by Washington, while the seat of Government was in this city.

Mr. Everett, in his discourse delivered here, not many years since, seemed, according to a printed report of it, to have considered the house as then standing. “The house in which he lived,” said he, “is known.” We question the accuracy of that impression. Claims are now made for different sites, below Sixth street, as the honored spot.

The matter is, probably, to be ascertained with certainty by reference to title papers.

We suppose you to be now the owner of the lot on which the house formerly stood, and if this is so, no one can know the history better than you.

Should it be agreeable to you to communicate to the Society, in a discourse before it, your knowledge of the subject, we shall be most happy to have you do so. We are with great respect,

Your Obedient Servants,

JOHN WM. WALLACE,
JOHN JORDAN, JR.,
CRAIG BIDDLE,
HENRY C. CAREY,
AUBREY H. SMITH,
CHARLES M. MORRIS,
TOWNSEND WARD.

To Nathaniel Burt, Esq.

1203 WALNUT STREET, January 14th, 1875.

GENTLEMEN :—

Your very kind letter of the sixth instant, requesting a discourse before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, on the subject of the Washington Mansion, in this city, is received.

As the subject is one of general interest, and as the papers in my possession are certainly such as permit of no doubt as to the location, I shall only fulfill a public duty in complying with your request, and will take pleasure in doing so on any evening agreeable to the Society.

Very Respectfully,

Your Obedient Servant,

NATHANIEL BURT.

To Messrs. John Wm. Wallace, John Jordan, Jr., and others.

A MINUTE.

SPECIAL MEETING,
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
February 12th, 1875.

The President in the chair, and a large attendance of members and others.

The President introduced Mr. Nathaniel Burt, who proceeded to read a paper entitled "The Washington Mansion in Philadelphia."

At the conclusion of the paper the following resolution, offered by Dr. Edward Shippen, U. S. N., was unanimously adopted :—

Resolved, That the thanks of the Society be presented to Mr. Burt for his most interesting, able and eloquent address ; and that a copy be requested for publication.

SAMUEL L. SMEDLEY,
Rec. Sec.

A D D R E S S .

There having been, as appears by the records of the “Historical Society of Pennsylvania,” an uncertainty as to the precise ground where stood the Residence of General Washington during the years of his Presidency; and as it is believed that the subject may be one of considerable interest to the Society and to others, the writer, holding papers which are amply decisive of the matter, respectfully submits the following memoranda and extracts from those papers, and will be happy to give to any one so desiring, or to a committee of the “Historical Society,” access to the same, for further elucidation and settlement.

An address, on the subject of the Washington Mansion in Philadelphia, can, in the nature of things, contain little or nothing that is new or original; it must consist almost solely of extracts from musty parchments and from records of the olden time.

And yet, it seems clearly a duty incumbent on the holder of those parchments, as he only has the power to do so, to collate for you such portions as may illustrate our subject, and may also be an humble contribution to the increasing activity and energy of our Historical Society—which have been so marked of late years—that the Society, as it looks kindly and lovingly upon the labors of its members, may very truly say, in the words of an old motto,

“SENESCO, NON SEGNECO.”

The first paper to be noticed is, naturally, the patent, to John Kinsey, then Chief Justice of the Province, recorded August 30th, 1738, in part, as follows:—

“John Penn, Thomas Penn, and Richard Penn, true and absolute Proprietaries and Governours in chief of the province of Pennsylvania and counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex, on Delaware, to all unto whom these presents shall come send greeting:

“WHEREAS, Our late Father, William Penn, Esquire, deceased, then Proprietary and Governour in chief of the province aforesaid, by his indenture of lease and release bearing date respectively the third and fourth days of July, in the year sixteen hundred and eighty-two, for the consideration therein mentioned, did grant, bargain and sell unto Thomas Harley, of Kingsham Court, in the county of Hereford, in that part of Great Britain called England, Esquire, and to his heirs and assigns forever, five thousand acres of land, in the province of Pennsylvania, in right of which purchase the said Thomas Harley, in his lifetime, and Thomas Harley, of the middle temple, Esquire, son and heir of the aforesaid Thomas Harley, became entitled to a lot of ground on the Front street in the city of Philadelphia, in the province aforesaid, and whereas the said Thomas Harley, the son, by his deed poll, bearing date the fifteenth day of August, in the year one thousand six hundred and ninety-nine, for the consideration mentioned, did grant, bargain and sell the said five thousand acres of land and lot or piece of ground aforesaid, unto Thomas Fairman, his heirs and assigns, forever” (this right afterwards passed to George Fitzwater, and after sundry clauses the deed proceeds), “and the surveyor general, on the twelfth day of September, in the year aforesaid, in lieu and recompense for the said Front street lot, before that time granted to our Sister Leetitia, did survey and lay out unto the aforesaid George Fitzwater all that lot or piece of ground situate on the South side of the High street of the city of Philadelphia, between the Fifth and Sixth streets of

the same city, bounded on the North with the said High street, eastward with a lot then in the tenure of Elizabeth Britton, southward with Chestnut street lots, and westward with a lot formerly Thomas Mayleigh's, being in breadth one hundred and twenty feet, and in length three hundred and six."

The patent then recites further transfers, and finally vests the property in John Kinsey.

On January 1st, 1761, I find a deed of James Kinsey (son of the above John Kinsey, and Chief Justice of New Jersey) and others, to John Lawrence, Esq.

A daughter of this John Lawrence, as I believe, had married William Masters, and in October of the same year, 1761, I find a deed of John Lawrence and wife, to their now widowed daughter, Mary Masters.

On the 19th of May, 1772, is recorded a deed reciting that "whereas, the said Mary Masters hath built on the aforesaid lot of ground, a messuage or dwelling house, and made other very valuable improvements thereon: Now know ye that the said Mary Masters, in consideration of the natural love and affection which she bears toward her eldest daughter, Mary Masters, hath given, granted and confirmed to her said daughter," etc., the lot as received by her from John Lawrence.

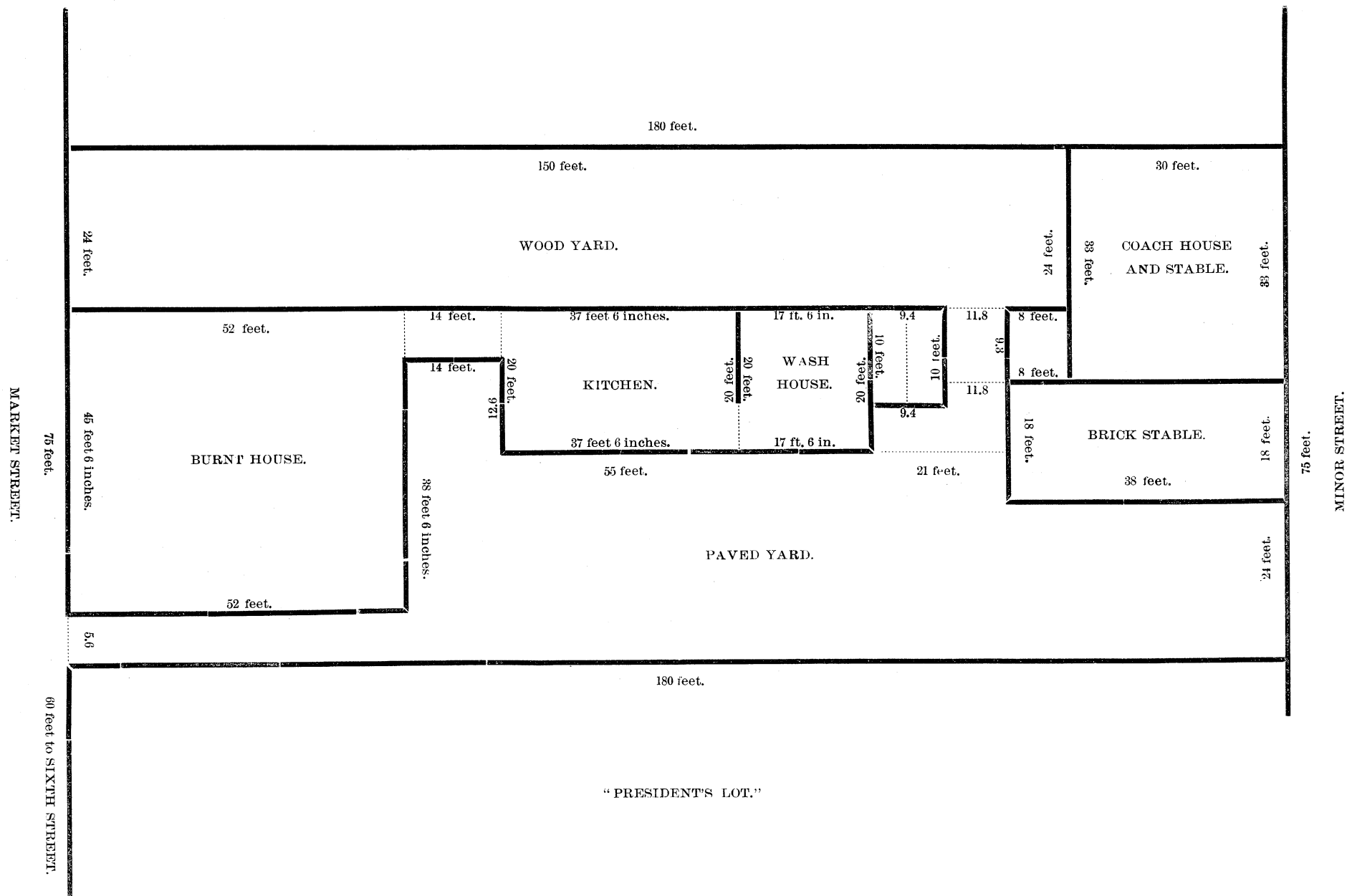
Whether captivated in part by the solid charms of the lady, or not, the Hon. Richard Penn married this Mary Masters, the daughter. I am unable to say whether he and his wife occupied the house built, as we have just seen, on this lot, by Mary Masters, the mother, but I believe it was this Mr. Penn who built and occupied the Landsdowne property until 1795.

During the possession of Philadelphia by the British forces,

Gen. Howe held his headquarters here, and it is also said that Gen. Arnold, when in command of the city, occupied it.

Among the interesting papers of this period, is the original letter of attorney from the Hon. Richard Penn to Tench Francis, empowering him to sell all his lands.

We come next to a deed of August 25th, 1785, of Mary Masters, the mother, Richard Penn and wife, and Sarah Masters, to Robert Morris, well-known in Revolutionary times, of a plot of ground on Market or High street, commencing, as appears by the papers, at a distance of sixty feet from Sixth street, "containing in breadth, on said (High) street, forty-eight feet, and in depth one hundred and eighty feet . . . and whereas, the capital messuage erected on said lot was, on or about the 2d day of January, 1780, for the most part, consumed by fire and rendered uninhabitable, whereupon the said Richard Penn, by letters under his hand, directed the said Tench Francis, whom he had constituted his attorney, with power to sell and convey all his real estate in America, to sell the ruins of the said messuage, together with all and singular the lots of ground herein-above described, which were and had been customarily used with the said messuage, to any person willing to purchase the same, and thereupon the said Tench Francis, as attorney to the said Richard Penn, contracted with the said Robert Morris for the absolute sale and conveyance of the said messuage and lots of ground, for the price of 3750 pounds, sterling money of Great Britain, which sum the said Robert Morris secured to be paid to the said Richard Penn upon the perfecting the title to the said Robert Morris, and thereupon the said Robert Morris received possession of the said ruins and lots of ground, and hath since caused them to be rebuilt and repaired, and hath made



FACSIMILE OF THE PLAN MADE FOR ROBERT MORRIS, BY RICHARD PENN AND OTHERS, AUGUST 25, 1785.

The lot marked "President's Lot" is referred to in the deeds as the lot reserved for "the President of the Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania." The "Burnt House" was rebuilt by Morris (*vide* Deeds), and is now 526, 528 and 530 Market street. Here was President Washington's House. The "Wood Yard" is now 524 Market street.

divers other very valuable improvements thereon and for various considerations, adding to the lot eastward, making it about seventy-five feet," to which a perfect title is made.

Accompanying this deed is a "plan," a copy of which is herewith submitted, and which abundantly explains itself. It is the precise ground plan of the Presidential Mansion, originally built by Mary Masters, as we have seen, between the years 1761 and 1772, and burned down in 1780, the part marked "burnt house" having been already rebuilt by Robert Morris. Its roomy and comfortable nature deserves notice, the main house being about 46x52, the Virginia-like kitchen, 37x20, and having very extensive coach house and stables. There were also large water reservoirs, then a feature of Philadelphia mansions, one of which still exists. An elevation, believed to be correct, is also submitted.

You will pardon me if I dwell for a few moments on this, the interesting period of the history of this property. The second session of the first Congress of the United States, the first and only Congress held in the city of New York, closed on the 12th day of August, 1790.

Among the prophetic incidents which I have met with in these researches, may be mentioned that, during the discussion by Congress as to the future seat of government, occurs, in a private letter, an objection, by a Southern member, to Philadelphia, because the "Quakers were eternally worrying them about their slaves."

Philadelphia was decided on, and during the remaining period of the two terms of the Presidency of Washington, Congress sat in this city, and it became necessary to procure a Presidential residence here. On the 30th of August Washington set out from New York for his loved home

in Virginia. On the 3d of September he writes to his private Secretary, Mr. Lear:—

“After a pleasant journey we arrived in this city (Philadelphia) on Thursday last, and to-morrow we proceed (if Mrs. Washington’s health will permit, for she has been much indisposed since we came here) toward Mount Vernon. The house of Mr. Robert Morris had, previous to my arrival, been taken by the corporation for my residence. It is the best they could get; it is, I believe, the best single house in the city, yet without additions it is inadequate to the commodious accommodation of my family. These additions, I believe, will be made. The first floor contains only two public rooms (except one for the upper servants); the second floor will have two public (drawing) rooms, and, with the aid of one room with a partition in it, the back building will be sufficient for the use of Mrs. Washington and the children and their maids, besides affording her a small place for a private study and dressing room. The third story will furnish you and Mrs. Lear with a good lodging room, a public office, for there is no room below for one, and two rooms for the gentlemen of the family. The garret has four good rooms, which must serve Mr. and Mrs. Hyde, unless they should prefer the room over the work house (doubtless the wash house in the plan; Mr. Hyde was butler), also William and such servants as it may not be better to place in the proposed additions to the back building. There is a room over the stable, which may serve the coachman and postillions, and there is a smoke-house, which may possibly be more valuable for the use of servants than for the smoking of meats. The intention of the addition to the back building is to provide a servants’ hall and one or two lodging rooms for the servants. There are good stables, but for twelve horses only,* and a coach house which will

* A casual reader might suppose that the statement in the text, that the stables on Minor street had room for “twelve horses *only*,” was a misprint, and that if the President had room for twelve horses, he had room for as many as he could wish to entertain. Horses, however, are a passion with most Virginia gentlemen,

hold all my carriages. Speaking of carriages, I have left my coach to receive a thorough repair, by the time I return, which I expect will be before the 1st of December."

He remarks in a later letter, "I had rather have heard that my repaired coach was plain and elegant, than rich and elegant."

The question of rent to be paid to Mr. Morris was one of which Washington writes at some length, on the 14th of November, fearing chiefly, as appears, that an effort would be made to force him to accept the residence as a gift of the city, for he writes:—

"To occupy the premises at the expense of any public body, I will not."

He feared also that, as he was determined to pay rent, delay would cause a rise, as the records show that the anticipated removal of Congress to this city had already caused a great increase in values: for instance, Mrs. Adams writes, on taking possession of her unfinished house on Bush Hill:

"Mr. Hamilton pleads the difficulty of getting workmen as an excuse for the house not being ready. Mrs. Lear was in to see me yesterday, and assures me that I am much better off than Mrs. Washington will be when she arrives,

and so it was with Washington. Davidson, a famous Virginia dealer, used to say that no man in his State was a more sagacious judge, or more intelligent purchaser of horses, than Washington. "I found," said Stuart, the artist, to one of his friends, "that it was difficult to interest Washington in conversation while I was taking his portrait. I began on the Revolution—the battles of Monmouth, Princeton, etc.—but he was absolutely dumb; I could get nothing from him. After a while I got on horses. I had touched the right chord. It seemed to interest him more than any other topic." Besides those in his own stables, on Minor street (which it would appear from his letter would hold twelve), I have it from a witness of the very highest accuracy in his statements (the late Mr. Thomas H. White, son of the venerable first Bishop of Pennsylvania), that the President, at one time, had no less than *fourteen* horses at Hilseimer's livery stables, in Philadelphia; well-known stables of that day, in Seventh street, below Walnut. (*Manuscript note on Dr. Griswold's copy of the Republican Court, intended for a new edition.*)

for that their house is not likely to be completed this year. If New York wishes any revenge for the removal, the citizens might be glutted if they would come here, where every article has risen to almost double its price."

The rent was finally fixed at three thousand dollars a year, and so continued during his occupancy.

In reminiscences of Mr. Richard Rush, I find:—

"The mansion of Washington stood by itself; it was a large double house; few if any equal to it are at present in Philadelphia. The brick of the house was, even in his time, dark with age, and two ancient lamp posts, furnished with large lamps, which stood in front, marked it, in conjunction with the whole external aspect, as the abode of opulence and respectability, before he became its august tenant. No market house then stood on the street. To the east a brick wall, six or seven feet high, ran well on towards Fifth street, until it met other houses (the first house believed to be now 514 and 516, also owned by Robert Morris, as I find elsewhere, was occupied by General Stewart); the wall inclosed a garden, which was shaded by lofty old trees, and ran back to what is now Minor street, where the stables stood. To the west no building adjoined it, the nearest house in that direction being at the corner of Sixth and Market, where lived Robert Morris."

This last is the house and lot which, as we have elsewhere shown, is marked in the old deeds as the lot "set apart for the residence of the President of the Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania."

In regard to servants for his new house, as showing the singular minuteness of Washington, permit me to extract the following:—

"With respect to Mr. Hyde, the butler, and his wife, if it is not stated in some paper handed in by Mr. Hyde, it is nevertheless strong in my recollection, that his wife's ser-

vices were put down at one, and his own services at two hundred dollars per annum. I have no wish to part with Mr. and Mrs. Hyde, first, because I do not like to be changing, and second, because I do not know where or with whom to supply their places. On the score of accounts I can say nothing, having never taken a comparative view of his and Fraunces' (his cook), but I am exceedingly mistaken if the expenses of the second table, at which Mr. Hyde presides, have not greatly exceeded those of the tables kept by Fraunces, for I strongly suspect (but in this I may be mistaken) that nothing is brought to my table, of liquors, fruits, or other luxuries, that is not used as profusely at his. If my suspicions are unfounded, I shall be sorry for having entertained them, and if they are not, it is at least questionable, whether under his successor the same things might not be done, in which case (if Hyde is honest and careful, of which you are better able to judge than I am), a change without a benefit might take place, which is not desirable, if they are to be retained on proper terms. I say they, for if Mrs. Hyde is necessary, for the purposes enumerated in your letter, and the cook is not competent to prepare the dessert, make cake, etc., I do not see of what use Hyde will be, more than William without her. Fraunces, besides being an excellent cook, knowing how to provide genteel dinners, and giving aid in dressing them, prepared the dessert, made the cake, and did everything that is done by Hyde and his wife together; consequently the services of Hyde alone are not to be compared with those of Fraunces, and if his accounts exceed those of Fraunces in the same seasons, four or five pounds a week, and at the same time appear fair, I shall have no scruple to acknowledge that I have entertained much harder thoughts of him than I ought to have done, although it is unaccountable to me how other families, on twenty-five hundred or three thousand dollars a year, should be enabled to entertain more company, or at least entertain more frequently, than I could do for twenty-five thousand dollars."

Behold the Father of his country puzzling over a problem which has posed many of his children since. The obscure and involved style of the letter is perhaps without another example, in Washington's correspondence.

Of the manner in which the Presidential residence was furnished, permit me to give some further extracts from the same series of letters:—

The President writes to Mr. Lear: "Mr. and Mrs. Morris have insisted upon leaving the two large looking glasses which are in the best rooms, because they have no place, they say, proper to remove them to (quaintly enough these same looking glasses appear again, in a subsequent paper, which I shall submit to you). You will therefore let them have instead, the choice of mine; the large ones I purchased of the French minister they do not incline to take, but will be glad of some of the others. They will also leave a large glass lamp in the entry or hall, and will take one or more of my glass lamps in lieu of it. Mrs. Morris has a mangle (I think it is called), for ironing clothes, which, as it is fixed in the place where it is commonly used, she proposes to leave and take mine. To this I have no objection, provided mine is equally good. I have no particular direction to give respecting the appropriation of the furniture. By means of the bow windows, the back rooms will become the largest, and of course will receive the furniture of the largest dining and drawing rooms, and in that case (though there are no closets in them, there are some in the steward's room, directly opposite), there is a small room adjoining the kitchen that might be appropriated for the Sevres china, and other things of that sort which are not in common use. You will find Mrs. Morris a notable lady in family arrangements, and can give you much information." (Mrs. Morris was a sister of the venerable Bishop White.) "I approve of the large table ornaments remaining on the sideboard, and of the pagodas standing in the smaller drawing room. Whether the green which you have, or a new yellow curtain, should be appro-

priated to the staircase above the hall, may depend on your getting an exact match in color, and so forth, of the latter. For the sake of appearances, one would not, in instances of this kind, regard a small additional expense.” *

Having thus endeavored to group together for you some facts tending to give a general idea of the new quarters of Washington, let me add a few glimpses of the life of its illustrious occupant, who took possession of it on Saturday, November 28th, 1790.

In the work called “The Republican Court,” to which I am already indebted, I find the following passage :—

“From the note-book of the late Mr. Horace Binney Wallace, ‘brother of the honored President of this Society,’ I am permitted to transcribe a record of some conversations with his mother, Mrs. Susan Wallace, in which that lady, so eminent for whatever is noble and beautiful in her sex, disclosed her recollections of Washington’s habits, personal appearance and manners.

“Mrs. Mary Binney, mother of Mrs. Wallace, resided in Market street, opposite to Gen. Washington’s. It was the General’s custom, frequently, when the day was fine, to come out to walk, attended by his secretaries, Mr. Lear and Major William Jackson, one on each side. He always crossed directly over from his own door to the sunny side of the street, and walked down; he was dressed in black, and all three wore cocked hats.

“General Washington had a large family coach, a light

* A valuable Parisian-made writing desk, used by Washington during his residence here, is preserved in the Historical Society’s Rooms, purchased by Mrs. Powel after Washington had given up the Mansion, as appears by the letter of Mr. Lear, in possession of the Society :—

“Mr. Lear presents his respectful compliments to Mrs. Powel, and, agreeably to General Washington’s command, has the honor to send her the writing desk which she bought of the General. The original cost of the desk was £98—New York currency, \$245. Mrs. Powel will also receive a pair of oval mirrors, brackets and lamps, which the General begs she will accept as a token of his respectful and affectionate remembrance.

“*Thursday, March 9th, 1797.*”

carriage and a chariot, all alike cream colored, painted with three enameled figures on each panel, and very handsome. He drove in the coach to Christ Church every Sunday morning, with two horses: drove the carriage and four into the country, to Landsdowne, the country seat then of Mr. Penn, afterwards of the Bingham's, and the Hills, where Mr. and Mrs. Adams resided, and other places (he frequently drove to Judge Peters' at Belmont). In going to the Senate, he used the chariot, with six horses.* All his servants were white, and wore liveries of white cloth, trimmed with scarlet or orange.

"Mrs. Wallace saw Gen. Washington frequently at public balls. His manners there were very gracious and pleasant. She went with Mrs. Oliver Wolcott to one of Mrs. Washington's drawing rooms. The General was present, and came up and bowed to every lady after she was seated.

"Mrs. Binney visited Mrs. Washington frequently. It was Mrs. Washington's custom to return visits on the third day, and she thus always returned Mrs. Binney's."

The President held receptions every other Tuesday, from three to four in the afternoon. These receptions were in the dining room, on the first floor, in the back part of the house (the bay windowed room, as we have seen). At three o'clock, all the chairs having been removed, the door from

* This was the most elegant of General Washington's carriages, and was presented to Mrs. Washington by the Government of Pennsylvania. It was built in London, expressly for Governor John Penn, and exhibited there for its remarkable beauty. Mr. Penn brought it with him to this country. When he returned to England it was purchased by the Pennsylvania Government, who gave it to Mrs. Washington. It was of cream color, richly decorated, as already stated, with gilt medallions. It was so elegant that some persons professed to think it too pompous for a Republican President. Mrs. Washington used frequently to drive in this carriage, with her lovely granddaughter Nelly, to visit Mrs. Penn at Landsdowne, taking with her Miss Elizabeth Bordley, now Mrs. James Gibson, or other young ladies to whom Miss Custis was particularly attached. Landsdowne was an estate of Mrs. Penn's, who owned and improved it, having built there, about the year 1774, an admirable house. She continued to improve it till Mr. Penn's death, in 1795, when she returned for the last time to England, and then it was bought by Mr. Bingham, to whose estate it belonged for many years. It is now part of the Park.

the large front room was opened, and the President, usually surrounded by members of his Cabinet or other distinguished men, was seen by the approaching visitor standing before the fireplace, his hair powdered and gathered behind in a silk bag, coat and breeches of plain black velvet, white or pearl colored vest, yellow gloves, a cocked hat in his hand, silver knee and shoe buckles, and a long sword, with a finely-wrought and glittering steel hilt, the coat worn over it, and its scabbard of polished leather. The name of every one was distinctly announced, and he rarely forgot that of a person who had once been introduced to him. The visitor was received with a dignified bow and passed on to another part of the room. At a quarter past three the door was closed, the gentlemen present moved into a circle, and he proceeded, beginning at his right hand, to exchange a few words with each. When the circuit was completed he resumed his first position, and the visitors approached him in succession, bowed and retired.

At the levees of Mrs. Washington he did not consider any visit as made to himself, and he appeared as a private gentleman, with neither hat nor sword, conversing without restraint, generally with women, who rarely had other opportunity of meeting him.

The first levee in Philadelphia was on the evening of Friday, the 25th of December, Christmas Day, 1790. Mrs. Adams went, attended by her son, Mr. Charles Adams, and she mentions the dazzling Mrs. Bingham and her beautiful sisters, the Misses Allen, the Misses Chew, and, in short, a constellation of beauties. The ladies of Philadelphia had already achieved that eminence in beauty which they have retained ever since. Miss Sally McKean wrote to a friend in New York—

“ You never could have had such a drawing room ; it was brilliant beyond anything you can imagine ; and though there was a great deal of extravagance, there was so much of Philadelphia taste in everything, that it must have been confessed the most delightful occasion of the kind ever known in this country.”

The winter presented a continual succession of balls, dinner parties, and other scenes of gayety and dissipation. But in all this be it remembered there was nothing, on the part of Washington or his household, beyond a due regard for the times and his position. So far from it, that Oliver Wolcott, in a letter to his wife, discussing the propriety of accepting the Secretaryship of the Treasury, offered to him, and of course requiring his residence in Philadelphia, declares, “ *The example of the President and his family will render parade and expense improper and disreputable.*”

Of the simple manners of the family, an extract from the travels of a Mr. Henry Wansey, an English manufacturer, who breakfasted with them on the eighth of June, 1794, will be of interest.

“ I confess,” he says, “ I was struck with awe and admiration when I recollected that I was now in the presence of the great Washington, ‘ the noble and wise benefactor of the world,’ as Mirabeau styles him. When we look down from this truly illustrious character, on other public servants, we find a glowing contrast ; nor can we fix our attention on any other great men, without discovering in them a vast and mortifying dissimilarity. . . . The President seemed very thoughtful, and was slow in delivering himself, which induced some to believe him reserved ; but it was rather the result of much reflection, for he had to me the appearance of affability and accommodation. He was at this time in his sixty-third year, but he had very little the appearance of age. Mrs. Washington herself made tea and

coffee for us. On the table were two small plates of sliced tongue and dry toast, bread and butter. Miss Eleanor Custis, her granddaughter, a very pleasing young lady of about sixteen, sat next to her, and next her grandson, George Washington Parke Custis, about two years younger. There were but slight indications of form, one servant only attending, who had no livery, and a silver urn for hot water was the only expensive article on the table. Mrs. Washington struck me as something older than the President, though I understand they were both born the same year. She was short in stature, rather robust, extremely simple in her dress, and wore a very plain cap, with her gray hair turned up under it.”*

These numerous, but I trust not tiresome, extracts, must suffice to picture faintly the social life of the illustrious occupant of the property which is our theme. Of his political life, compared with the vastness of the subject, we have time to say but little. But it was, as you all know, the period when, from out of the chaos and darkness of our earlier history, there came, by the will of a munificent Creator (working through his divinely appointed agents, the great men of that day), order and light. For were they not Divinely appointed? Has there not been, from the day when the Lord called Abraham, and stirred up the spirit of Cyrus,

* A beautiful incident of family life is recited by Mrs. Elizabeth Bordley Gibson :—

“Mrs. Washington was in the habit of retiring at an early hour to her own room, unless detained by company, and there, no matter what the hour, Nellie attended her. One evening, my father’s carriage being late in coming for me, my dear young friend invited me to accompany her to grandmama’s room. There, after some little chat, Mrs. Washington apologized to me for pursuing her usual preparations for the night, and Nellie entered upon her accustomed duty by reading a chapter and a psalm from the old family Bible, after which all present knelt in evening prayer; Mrs. Washington’s faithful maid then assisted her to disrobe and lay her head upon the pillow; Nellie then sang a verse of some sweetly soothing hymn, and then, leaning down, received her parting blessing for the night, with some emphatic remark on her duties, improvements, etc. The effect of these judicious habits and teachings appeared in the granddaughter’s character through life.”

and before and since, throughout history, the manifest presence and inspiration of the Almighty, in the great crises of mankind?

And when was ever a greater?

The time had come for another experiment of a Republic, of self-government; self-government; which means, and therefore is only possible to certain races of men, GOVERNING ONE'S SELF FIRST OF ALL. Experiments had been tried, and failed, often before. Ancient History bears record of several, so evanescent, they scarce left a trace on its pages. One, indeed, bright and luminous for then and for all time, but bearing seeds of ruin which soon ripened; Modern History (excepting the unique instance of Switzerland, which, from its minuteness, and the simple and hardy manners of its people, could afford no presage of the experiment on a great scale); Modern History contains, excepting this, no instance of a successful long-continued republic. Here, then, was the work for the men of that day; to inaugurate a new era for humanity; to lay the foundations of the new nation, destined to be of no one race, but a home for all races, so broad that the waters of the two great oceans of the world only bound it, so deep that the earthquake of civil war could shake, but not shatter it.

In this city, in that honored building, which has no association more honored, more pregnant with the future, were held the sessions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

I have often thought the work of that Convention, and the labors of Washington which led to and dominated it, have never been sufficiently appreciated among us. In his remarkable circular to the Governors of all the States, of June 8th, 1783, peace being declared, and our States

being independent and confederate, Washington, looking most anxiously to the future, says, prefacing by the characteristic words:—

“The great object for which I had the honor to hold an appointment in the service of my country being accomplished, I am now preparing to return to that domestic retirement which it is well known I left with the greatest reluctance.

. “For the American people, sole lords and proprietors of a vast tract of continent, comprehending all the various soils and climates of the world, and abounding with all necessities and conveniences of life; and acknowledged possessors of absolute freedom and independence; this is the time of their political probation; this is the moment to establish or ruin their character forever. This is the favorable moment to give such a tone to the federal government as will enable it to answer the ends of its institution; or this may be the moment for relaxing the powers of the Union, annihilating the cement of the confederation, and exposing us to become the sport of European politics. With this conviction of the importance of the present crisis, silence in me would be a crime.”

He then proceeds to elaborate four leading points, as essential to the well-being, and even the existence, of the United States.

“First. An indissoluble Union of the States, under one federal head, and a perfect acquiescence of the several States in the full exercise of the prerogative vested in such head.

Second. A sacred regard to public justice in discharging debts and fulfilling contracts made by Congress, for the purpose of carrying on the war.

Third. A proper organization of the militia, and

Fourth. A disposition among the people of the United States to forget local prejudices and policies; to make mu-

tual concessions, and to sacrifice individual advantages to the interests of the community.

After setting forth his views on these subjects, he concludes, "It now remains to be my final request, that your Excellency will communicate these sentiments to your legislature at their next meeting, and that they may be considered the legacy of one who has ardently wished, on all occasions, to be useful to his country, and who, even in the shade of retirement, will not fail to implore the divine benediction on it."

"I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection; that he would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for brethren who have served in the field; and finally, that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which are the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without whose example in those things we can never hope to be a happy nation."

And when, in May, 1787, he, who had been "first in war," now greatest among the great, was made President of the Convention, and his influence was felt in every clause;

And when, resting again at his beloved Mt. Vernon, during the time required for the Constitution to receive the approval of the States, he hears, in July, 1788, of its adoption; he writes:—

"We may trace the finger of Providence through those dark, mysterious events which first induced the States to appoint a general Convention, and then led them, one after another, by such steps as were best calculated to effect the object, into an adoption of the system recommended by the general Convention; thereby, in all human probability, lay-

ing a foundation for tranquillity and happiness, when we had but too much reason to fear that confusion and misery were coming rapidly upon us."

And yet again, when, in April, 1789, having, as President of the newly organized nation, bade adieu, for another eight years, to his retirement, he was met on the frontier of Pennsylvania, "by his former companion in arms, Mifflin, now governor of the State, who, with Judge Peters, and a civil and military escort, was waiting to receive him, and at Chester, cavalry had assembled from the surrounding country; and a superb white horse was led out for him to mount, and a grand procession set forward, with General St. Clair at its head, gathering numbers as it advanced, passing under triumphal arches, and entering Philadelphia, amid the shouts of the multitude. And when, after a day of public festivity, at a great civic banquet tendered him, in response to the congratulations of the Mayor, Washington replied, and in that reply, we find his own answer to our question: were they not Divinely appointed?

"When I contemplate the interposition of Providence, as it was visibly manifested, in guiding us through the Revolution, in preparing us for the reception of the general government, and in conciliating the good-will of the people of America toward one another, after its adoption, I feel myself oppressed, and almost overwhelmed, with a sense of Divine munificence! I feel that nothing is due to my personal agency, in all these wonderful and complicated events, except what can be attributed to an honest zeal for the good of my country."

And then and there began the great experiment, the practical working, the crucial test of the new constitution, and, which must not be forgotten, of our fitness for it and for our high destiny. The duty of each branch of the government

was fully appreciated by each to be, not only to deal with all questions of the time, as they arose, but also to set an example and a precedent for all time. How profoundly important, then, in a political aspect, were those Presidential years passed in that old house on High street.

Washington continued to reside here, with intervals of absence at Mount Vernon and on tours of duty or pleasure, until March, 1797.

On the second day of March, 1797, he writes to Henry Knox:—

“Among the last acts of my political life, and before I go hence into retirement, profound will be the acknowledgment of your kind and affectionate letter. . . . To the wearied traveler, who sees a resting place and is bending his body to lean thereon, I now compare myself. . . . The remainder of my life, which in the course of nature cannot be long, will be occupied in rural amusements, and though I shall seclude myself as much as possible, none would more than myself be regaled by the company of those I esteem at Mount Vernon, more than twenty miles from which, after I arrive there, it is not likely that I ever shall be. . . . As early in next week as I can make my arrangements for it, I shall commence my journey to Mt. Vernon. To-morrow, at dinner, I shall, as a servant of the public, take my leave of the President elect, of the foreign characters, the heads of departments, etc., and the day following, with pleasure, I shall witness the inauguration of my successor to the chair of government.”

On the 3d of March (according with the intimation in this last letter) he gave a farewell dinner to the foreign ministers and their wives, Mr. and Mrs. Adams, Mr. Jefferson, and other conspicuous personages of both sexes. “During the dinner much hilarity prevailed,” says Bishop White, who was present. “When the cloth was removed, Washing-

ton filled his glass and said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, this is the last time I shall drink your health as a public man. I do it with sincerity, wishing you all possible happiness.' The gayety of the company was checked in an instant; all felt the importance of this leave taking. Mrs. Liston, the wife of the British minister, was so much affected that tears streamed down her cheeks.

On the 4th of March an immense crowd had gathered about Congress Hall. At eleven o'clock Mr. Jefferson took the oath as Vice President, in the presence of the Senate, and proceeded with that body to the chamber of the House of Representatives, which was densely crowded, many ladies occupying chairs ceded to them by members. That House of Representatives, at Sixth and Chestnut, only one square from his home on Market street, which has been minutely described in the masterly address of the President of this Society, of March, 1872.

After a time Washington entered, amidst enthusiastic cheers and acclamations, and the waving of handkerchiefs. Mr. Adams soon followed, and was likewise well received, but not with like enthusiasm. Having taken the oath of office, Mr. Adams, in his inaugural address, spoke of his predecessor as one, "who, by a long course of great actions, regulated by prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, had merited the gratitude of his fellow citizens, commanded the highest praises of foreign nations, and secured immortal glory with posterity." At the close of the ceremony, as Washington moved toward the door to retire, there was a rush from the gallery to the corridor, that threatened the loss of life or limb, so great was the anxiety to catch a last look of one who had so long been the object of veneration. When Washington was in the street he waved his hat in

return for the cheers of the multitude, his countenance radiant with benignity, his gray hair streaming in the wind.

The crowd followed him to his door; there, turning round, his countenance assumed a grave, almost melancholy expression, his eyes were bathed in tears, his emotions were too great for utterance, and only by gestures could he indicate his thanks and convey his farewell blessing.

In the evening a splendid banquet was given to him by the citizens, in the amphitheatre. Among the paintings which decorated the walls, one represented the home to which he was about to hasten, Mount Vernon.

Much as I would love to dwell longer on this portion of our subject, we must pass on.

Robert Morris, the owner of the Washington mansion, the great financier of the Revolution, honored and beloved as he was by all, yet, like great financiers before and since, dazzled, perhaps, like the holder of Aladdin's lamp, at their boundless creation of apparent wealth, and yet finding that there comes a time when the lamp no more responds to their touch—Robert Morris became embarrassed in his private affairs, and was (I believe, before even the close of the century) arrested for debt, at his house on Lemon Hill, whither he retreated, as to a castle, from his persecutors.

Mr. Morris at that time owned lots fronting on High street, 60 feet, adjoining Sixth street, then 75 feet, adjoining the 60, then 46 feet, being the present numbers 514 and 516, being 181 feet on Market or High street, and extending through to Minor. Whether he owned any of the ground between 516 and 524, I am not able to say; the present owners could inform us, and the Society would be indebted to them for the information. But the value of those lots which we know that he owned was greater than would be supposed.

It must be remembered, this was an era, such as we look forward to in the Centennial period in our city. Philadelphia had just been adopted as the political capital of the nation, and the influx of strangers was very great, and, American-like, future fancied values were discounted in the present.

Among the schemes of Mr. Morris, which tended largely to his ruin, was the erection of a new dwelling-house, on a scale then unknown to America. Having for some time had the plan in mind, he had, as is narrated in *Watson's Annals*, a conversation with a French Architect, who offered to build such a residence as Mr. Morris wanted for the sum of \$60,000. On a friend remonstrating with him on such an enormous outlay for those times (for it is hardly too much to say that, considering the price of labor and material, \$60,000 then would go as far as \$600,000 now), to the remonstrance, Morris replied, "Oh, my Market street lots will sell for \$80,000," in which he was correct. Accordingly he purchased the square of ground, from Seventh to Eighth and from Chestnut to Walnut, and about the middle of it, where Sansom street now runs, he began the new palace; but it was not destined to be completed; the foundation and first floor, or perhaps only part of the first floor, were erected, when the storm of his financial troubles broke upon him.

Preparing for his new project he offers for sale, in a paper which I have, this property, describing it as "that in which the President of the United States now resides." He soon found a purchaser, as the next paper to be noticed reads:—

"This Indenture, made on this 18th day of March, 1795, between the Hon. Robert Morris, of the city of Philadelphia, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Mary, his wife, of the one part, and Andrew Kennedy, of the same

